

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.) said yesterday that he would welcome an ethics committee investigation into his fundraising efforts for an academic center that bears his name. "I will be calling for it to be expedited so that I can get on with my work," said Range... House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.) said yesterday that he would welcome an ethics committee investigation into his fundraising efforts for an academic center that bears his name.

"I will be calling for it to be expedited so that I can get on with my work," said Rangel, who has scheduled a 10 a.m. news conference today to address the controversy.

Rangel has written letters on congressional stationery and has sought meetings to ask for corporate and foundation contributions for the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Service at City College of New York. Some of those he has approached have business interests before his committee, which has broad jurisdiction over tax and trade matters.

House ethics rules allow lawmakers to solicit money for certain kinds of nonprofit groups but bar the use of official resources, such as office equipment and supplies. They specifically ban the implied endorsement that accompanies use of congressional letterhead.

House Republican leader John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) and the nonpartisan watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington separately called this week for the ethics committee to look into Rangel's fundraising.

"It totally violates the rule," Melanie Sloan, executive director of the watchdog group, said this week.

But in a brief interview yesterday, Rangel, 78, maintained that he had done nothing wrong.

"They were not requesting money anyway," he said of the letters. "Anybody who would take the time to read the letters [could see that]."

The 38-year veteran lawmaker also has secured nearly \$2.6 million in congressional earmarks for the center, which has a \$30 million fundraising goal and will house his papers when he retires.

Republican Reps. Jeff Flake (Ariz.) and **John Campbell (Calif.)**, both critics of earmarks, **said yesterday that they will challenge further attempts by Rangel to direct taxpayers' money to the project. They said they were unaware that Rangel had secured two HUD grants totaling more than \$690,000 for the project until The Washington Post reported on his fundraising this week.**

"[T]his appears to be an ongoing effort to milk federal taxpayers," Flake said in a statement.

**Campbell said: "Are people here in the House going to continue to vote for this effort, or will they recognize that this is not only wrong but appears to clearly be a violation of House rules?"**

Rangel said in an interview last month that he may seek more public money for the center.

"I will be trying again to get earmarks," he said. "I try to help my community as much as I can."